

CTPR 421 PRACTICUM IN EDITING

USC School of Cinematic Arts

Spring 2020

Section: 18533

Instructor: Professor John Rosenberg

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Class Meetings: Monday 7-9:50pm (SCA 203)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The goal of this workshop is to explore how editing shapes storytelling, using content from a variety of media and in various styles. It will deepen your knowledge of modern non-linear editing equipment, primarily the Avid, and techniques.

This is a hands-on course combined with lectures and demonstrations relating to aesthetic and technical issues in post production. You will be editing a variety of scenes from popular films and television shows. This will require you to use your storytelling, problem solving and technical skills to solve the myriad of challenges that confront the editor in the editing room.

Editing is not merely sticking the pieces together so they fit. It's about fulfilling an overall vision, creating a captivating flow of sound and images, and revealing the story's text and subtext. Emotion, pace and rhythm are important components of a well edited film. These are the purview of the editor. We will explore how these aspects at times supercede the time honored tradition of story and plot. We will look at examples of well edited scenes as well as short films that you and your professor will screen and discuss.

This class will also include a thorough examination of genre as it relates to story and structure. When your audiences consider which film they want to see, the choice of genre has a significant influence on their decision. Genre holds precedence in the world of film because it speaks to the audience's emotional response. You will be given professionally shot dailies to edit in various genres. These will be critiqued by your professor and your colleagues in class. Afterwards you will have an opportunity to re-cut your projects based on these notes. Some of these scenes will be re-edited to alter the genre, for instance a comedy may become a thriller. You will discover how each genre has its own demands and creates particular expectations in the audience which the editor must address. Along the way we will also discuss the organization and politics of the editing room, from working with directors and producers, to interactions with the studios and the preview process. These and other topics will be reinforced by short reading assignments from your textbook, *THE HEALTHY EDIT: Creative Editing Techniques for Perfecting Your Movie* (Focal Press, 2018).

This class will prepare you – both aesthetically and technically – to assume a role as editor on a CTPR 480 project, as well as in your post-school careers, on films edited either by you or others. We are going to concentrate primarily on the aesthetic aspect of editing. In addition, you will be given a working knowledge of how to organize an editing room and operate the various tools that you need to make your editing decisions.

CLASS FORMAT:

The class is structured to give you an overview of how a film is made from the point of view of editing and post production which are becoming more and more prominent in the filmmaking process. Along the way, therefore, you will get a sense of the entire flow of film editing – including its thought processes, technical needs, scheduling, and politics. Each week we will discuss various aesthetic and technical aspects of editing. A portion of the class will be devoted to editing and/or critiquing edited scenes. During this time you will be editing in pairs, except for the first and final projects where you will be on your own. I encourage you to ask questions and give comments. Your participation is a significant part of this course. If you don't understand something, ask. If you disagree with a concept or idea, say so. We all need to be challenged.

WEEKLY COURSE BREAKDOWN:

This breakdown may change several times during the course of the semester, depending on feedback and the progress of your work.

1	1/13/20	<p>Class introduction. Intro to the Editing Thought Process. The Editing Triangle. Review of Basic Principles. The Opening Scene. Select partners.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Thinking like an editor. Focusing the story. The emblematic image. The first shot we see. The first character we see. Translation from script to screen.</p>	
2	1/20/20	<p>Examining the Scene. Viewing Dailies. Director's Dailies Notes. Script supervising/assistant editor tasks (scripty paperwork, organization, naming conventions)</p> <p>Lined scripts. Script analysis. Storyboards and animatics. Shot sizes and their use. 6K (and beyond) frame extraction. How scenes can be constructed. How to organize an editing project. Academy leaders and slates.</p>	
3	1/27/20	<p>Examining the Cut. Dialogue Editing.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>AVID workshop</p>	Avid workshop

4	2/3/20	<p>Examining The Sequence.</p> <p>Text and subtext. Examining the individual cut. Transitions – straight cuts, dissolves, wipes, fades, shot size, sound. How shots can be restructured. When to cut. When not to cut. The L-cut.</p>	
5	2/10/20	<p>Pace and Rhythm.</p> <p>The editor's purview. Metric and rhythmic montage. Slo-mo, undercrank, freeze. Film Doctoring.</p>	
6	2/17/20	<p>Genre.</p> <p>The Action Sequence.</p> <p>The Genre Landscape. Creating an action sequence. The Guidepost Shot. Geography and temporality. Plasticity of the medium. The jump cut. Film Time exercise. Genre iconography and the insert shot.</p>	Guest Speaker (based on availability)
7	2/24/20	<p>Genre: Fantasy, Sci-Fi and the Western.</p> <p>Midterm evaluation Traditional opticals, CGI. Greenscreen and how to use it. Motion control. Motion capture. The effects editor. Interfacing with visual effect teams.</p>	<p>Using script sync. Visual Effects. Using Sapphire effects.</p> <p>Working between Avid Media Composer and other programs, like After Effects.</p>

8	3/2/20	Genre: The Thriller vs. Mystery. What the audience knows. What the protagonist knows. Creating suspense. Shot length.	
9	3/9/20	Genre: Editing Comedy. Structure in comedy editing. The Banana Peel Effect. Sight gags. Rule of Threes as it applies to comedy. Comic timing.	
	3/16/20	SPRING BREAK	NO CLASS
10	3/23/20	Documentaries. Telling a story with real footage. Style in documentaries. The Auteur Editor. Voiceover and montage.	
11	3/30/20	AVID Workshop	Avid Workshop Avid techniques particularly useful for Discontinuity-Style editing, including Animatte, Paint, Chroma-key.
12	4/6/20	Music Design. Using music to tell a story. Spotting music. What music can do to accentuate your scene. Source and score. Moving towards a final mix. Musical style. Possible guest speaker	

13	4/13/20	Sound Design. Post Post Production (Finishing). Spotting Sound. Outputting for sound. Pre-dubs, final mixing.	Guest Speaker (based on availability)
14	4/20/20	Commercials and Television. Teasers and tags. Act breaks. :30 and :60 spots. Commercials influence on longer form editing.	
15	4/27/20	Style. Wrapping Up. Freelance life. The studio system. Union, agents and negotiation. Style. How to look at longer formats. The End. Looking Ahead. The Importance of Endings.	
	5/4/20	STUDY WEEK	
	5/11/20	FINALS	Final projects due

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

You will be required to edit and/or re-edit a scene each week, sometimes on your own, sometimes with a partner. You will have the opportunity, on a rotating basis, to present your cuts in class, and accept criticism from your classmates and me so you can re-edit the scenes for a screening during the following week. My comments will be given verbally during the class. You won't get a written critique.

Projects will be edited using the state-of-the-art nonlinear digital editing system used in features and television today -- the Avid Media Composer. You will also be given a

background in some assistant editor techniques – synching (in the Avid), multicam, digitizing, creating EDLs/AAFs, and organizing and media management. You will attend a lab taught by Jeremy Deneau in SCA B148 in the basement Post Production area, along with tutorials on lynda.com (available at <http://itservices.usc.edu/lynda>). In the Lab you will learn supplemental techniques that good editors and assistant editors need to know about the editing process, and be able to ask questions that arise during the editing of your own scenes.

REQUIRED READING:

Rosenberg, John. *THE HEALTHY EDIT: Creative Techniques for Perfecting Your Movie*. Focal Press, 2018.

RECOMMENDED READING:

Dancyger, Ken, *The Technique of Film Editing*. Focal Press, 2006.

Dmytryk, Edward, *On Film Editing*. Focal Press, 1984.

Eisenstein, Sergei, *Film Form*. Mariner Books, 2014 (reissued).

Kauffman, Sam, *Avid Editing: Guide for Beginning & Intermediate Users*. Focal Press, 2012.

Hurbis-Cherrier, Mick, *Voice and Vision*. Focal Press, 2011.

Reisz, Karel and Millar, Gavin, *Technique of Film Editing*. Focal Press, 2009.

RECOMMENDED ON THE WEB:

ArtoftheGuillotine.com, editor Gordon Burkell. Interviews with film editors (including your professor), reviews and news about editing and post-production.

Avid Technology Podcast Interviews with filmmakers and software designers such as Jabez Olssen, editor of King Kong, and Phil Avanzatto, lead animator at PURE.

Creative Planet's Digital Production Buzz ~ Interviews authors, filmmakers and people involved in post production and production.

Creative Screenwriting Magazine. USC alum Jeff Goldsmith interviews screenwriters of all levels of film. A great resource for the people who do the original writing of the script (since editors do the final rewrite).

CreativeCOW.net. A good series of interviews from the people at creativecow, one of the premiere website/bulletin boards for the DV filmmaker. Lots of great topics.

DV Show. A weekly podcast devoted to all things digital video.

Film Editing Podcast. Assistant editor/editor Patrick interviews editors and directors with the constant emphasis on editing.

KCRW's The Business. A weekly half-hour program about the entertainment business.

Usually some good discussion about issues involved in production or distribution.

GRADING:

Grades will be calculated based on a multiple choice midterm (20%), participation and preparedness for class (50%) and the final project (30%) at the end of the semester where you will assemble a few consecutive scenes from a film that you will be editing into one long sequence with music and sound effects. The Monday of finals week, you will submit that

Quicktime. I expect you to attend that final class, even though it is during the final exam period, since there will be some discussion and hopefully a guest speaker.

Students will be required to attend and participate in all classes. Attendance will be taken at every class. Written explanations will be necessary *in advance* for all excused absences. Unexcused absences will be reflected in the course grade. In addition, students will be expected to be at class on time; *lateness will also be reflected in your grade*. Please make use of my e-mail address above if you have an unavoidable problem. If you cannot make the class or will be late, let me know by the evening before the class.

Since film editors are judged on their ability to complete their work in a timely manner, you will likewise be responsible for completing each stage of every project on time and in a professional manner.

OFFICE HOURS:

My office hours are by appointment on Tuesdays (1-3) though I am available at other times. I will also return emails. The best way to reach me is my USC SCA email address – jrosenberg@cinema.usc.edu.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

The School of Cinematic Arts expects the highest standards of excellence and ethics from all of you. It is particularly important that you avoid plagiarism, cheating on our quiz, submitting any work that you or your partner have not done. Violations of this policy will result in a failing grade and be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. If you have any questions or doubts about these policies, consult "SCampus Guide" and/or confer with your SA or me.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure that the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30am to 5pm, Monday through Friday. Their phone number is 213/740-0776.